

# some thoughts about metadata and usability

Dianne Dietrich

Matt Connolly

Metadata Working Group – 18 Nov 2011

# in response to selected usability heuristics by Jakob Nielsen

Full list at:  
[http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/  
heuristic\\_list.html](http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_list.html)



# Match between system and the real world

The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

# Match between system and the real world

- Avoid jargon
- Index this metadata well !

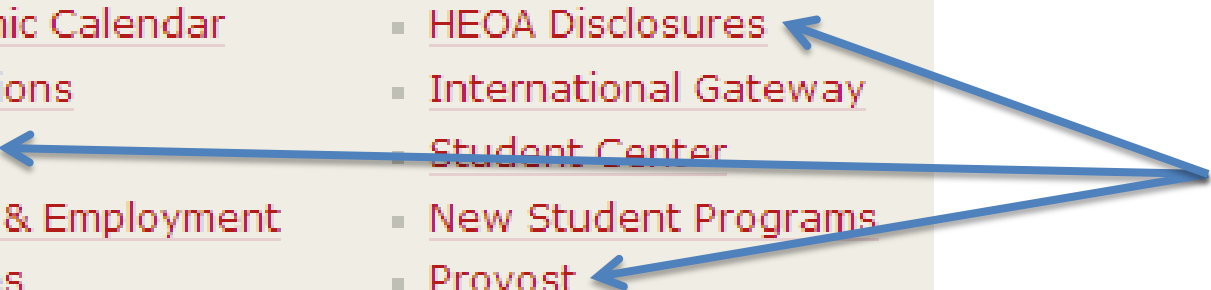
# Match between system and the real world

## Student Life and Academics

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Admissions](#)
- [Bursar](#)
- [Career & Employment](#)
- [Colleges](#)
- [Courses](#)
- [Dining Menus](#)
- [Financial Aid, Scholarships, & Awards](#)
- [Gannett Health Services](#)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Greek Life](#)
- [HEOA Disclosures](#)
- [International Gateway](#)
- [Student Center](#)
- [New Student Programs](#)
- [Provost](#)
- [Student Organizations](#)
- [Student Ride Board](#)
- [Student Services](#)
- [Summer Session](#)
- [University Assemblies](#)
- [University Registrar](#)
- [Winter Session](#)

<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/>

**Would  
students  
know what  
these mean?**



# Match between system and the real world

From “Bursar Services” page

[DFA Home](#) ▶ [University Treasurer](#) ▶ [Bursar Services](#) ▶ [Students and Parents](#) ▶ [Paying Your Bill](#) ▶

## Cornell Installment Plan

The Cornell Installment Plan (CIP), also known as the Tuition Pay Plan, is administered by Sallie Mae® and enables students and their families to make interest-free, monthly installments to cover each semester's tuition and expenses. You must self-enroll each academic year. Enrollment must be done electronically or by calling Sallie Mae directly at (800) 635-0120. Get help with calculating your payments by using our Budget Tips.

[Advanced Search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

Results **1 - 10** of about **18600**. Search took **0.32** seconds.

[Sort by date](#) | [Sort by relevance](#) | [Next>](#)

**[Comprehensive Master Plan](#)** - Key Match

<http://masterplan.cornell.edu/>

**[Cornell University: Cornell Installment Plan](#)**

... **Cornell Installment Plan**. ... Enrollment in the **Cornell Installment Plan** will not enroll the student in a meal **plan** or housing program. ...

[www.dfa.cornell.edu/treasurer/bursar/studentsparents/paying/cip/index.cfm](http://www.dfa.cornell.edu/treasurer/bursar/studentsparents/paying/cip/index.cfm) - 9k - 2010-01-12 - [Cached](#)

Results from  
Cornell's  
search page

# Consistency and standards

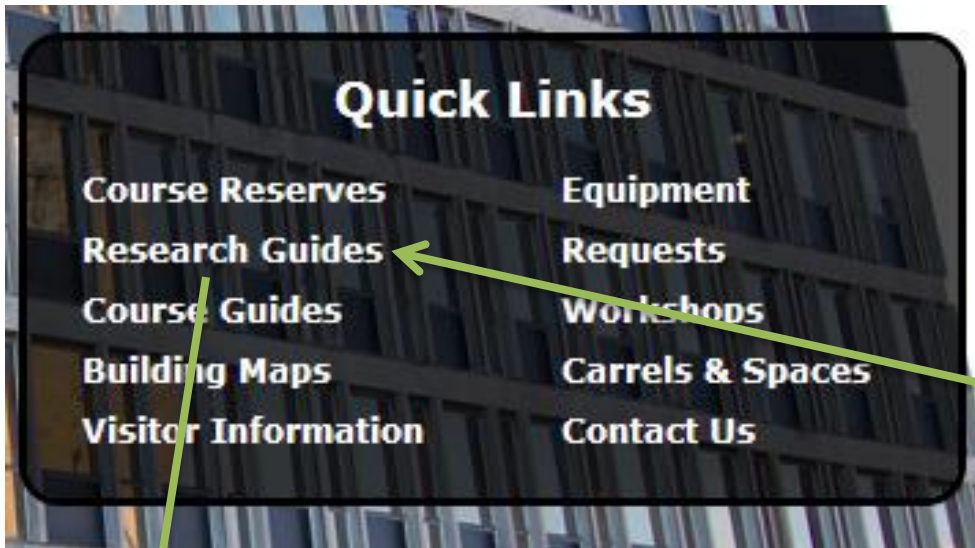
Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.  
Follow platform conventions.

# Consistency and standards

- Use the same terminology throughout a site and/or system of sites  
“Contact us”, “Purchase request”, etc.
- Another thought: should we have a common set of vocabulary terms for library web pages?



# Consistency and standards



(with apologies for picking on the Olin/Uris site...)

## Subject Guides

- ▶ [Collections](#)
- ▼ [Services](#)
  - [Services](#)
  - ▶ [Borrowing & Lending](#)
  - ▶ [Computing, Printing, Scanning & Photocopying](#)
  - ▶ [Equipment](#)
  - ▶ [Instruction](#)
  - ▼ [Research](#)
    - [Research](#)
    - ▶ [About Reference](#)
    - [Ask a Librarian](#)
    - [Request a Research Consultation](#)
    - [Subject Guides](#)

 [Printer-friendly version](#)

### Uncategorized

### Anthropology

- [American Indian Studies](#)
- [Anthropology Research Guide](#)
- [Anthropology: Guide to Library Collections and Services](#)
- [Archaeology Research Guide](#)
- [Folklore, Fairytales, and Symbolism: A Research Guide](#)

# Recognition rather than recall

Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

# Recognition rather than recall

- Make clear labels and descriptions for key links on a page
- Employ breadcrumbs so that users know where they are within a page structure

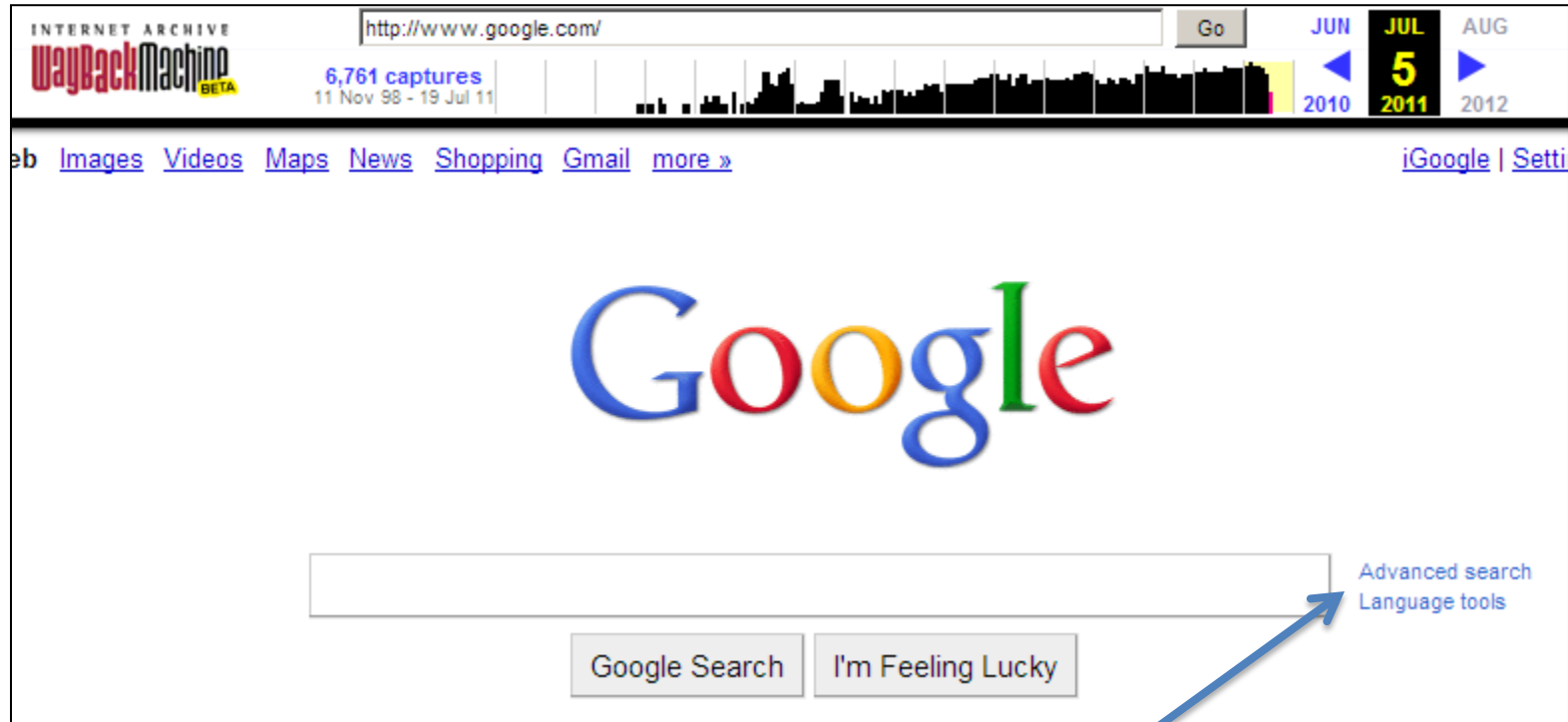
# Flexibility and efficiency of use

Accelerators -- unseen by the novice user -- may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

# Flexibility and efficiency of use

- Ensure search supports queries for common tasks such as library hours, known item searching
- Make an advanced search option prominent

# Flexibility and efficiency of use



This screenshot shows the Google homepage as it appeared on July 5, 2011, archived by the Internet Archive. The browser's address bar displays 'http://www.google.com/'. The Wayback Machine logo is visible in the top left, indicating 6,761 captures between November 11, 1998, and July 19, 2011. The top navigation bar includes links for 'Images', 'Videos', 'Maps', 'News', 'Shopping', 'Gmail', and 'more'. The Google logo is prominently displayed in the center. Below the logo is a search input field, followed by 'Google Search' and 'I'm Feeling Lucky' buttons. To the right of the search field, links for 'Advanced search' and 'Language tools' are visible. A blue arrow points from the 'Advanced search' link in this screenshot to the corresponding link in the screenshot below.

The link to  
advanced  
search was  
there in July...

# Flexibility and efficiency of use

[Will dinosaurs \*\*come back\*\*? - Yahoo! Answers](#)

[answers.yahoo.com](#) › ... › [Earth Sciences & Geology](#)

9 answers - Jan 22, 2009

In theory, dinosaurs could **come back** if scientists ever clone any, and **find** suitable habitat for them. Otherwise, with the exception of aves, ...



[Advanced search](#)

[Search Help](#)

[Give us feedback](#)

[Google Home](#)

[Advertising Programs](#)

[Business Solutions](#)

[Privacy](#)

[About Google](#)

Now the link to  
advanced search is  
at the bottom of a  
search results page

by the way, I searched for this...

Google

come back, advanced search

# Aesthetic and minimalist design

Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.



# Aesthetic and minimalist design

- Make basic and comprehensive metadata displays clear and coherent
- Don't overwhelm users with unnecessary metadata

# The rest of the heuristics:

- Visibility of system status
- Error prevention
- Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors
- Help and documentation